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ABSTRACT

Findings of a study of beginning principals and their roles as managers are presented in this paper. Interviews were conducted with 12 new primary and secondary principals in Victoria, Australia as part of a longitudinal study from 1989 to 1993. This paper focuses on interview data collected during the first year of the study. Drawing from Mintzberg's 1973 work, "The Nature of Managerial Work," three aspects of managerial work are identified: (1) its nature; (2) its characteristics; and (3) managerial roles. Findings related to the nature of the new principals' managerial work indicates that principals' jobs are similar; principals engage in challenging and nonprogrammed work; they are both generalists and specialists; and their roles are complex. The job is characterized by an unrelenting pace and fragmentation, brevity, and variety. New principals also demonstrate a preference for action and verbal communication and have strong communication with external networks. Finally, the beginning principal engages in a variety of interpersonal, informational, and decision-making roles. (Contains 25 references.) (LMI)

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THE PRINCIPAL AS MANAGER.

PAPER PRESENTED AT THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL CONFERENCE

of

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M. Mallia

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Go with people
Live among them,
Learn from them,
Love them,
Start with what they know
When their task is accomplished
Their work done
The people all remark
"We have done it ourselves"

Ancient Taoist Poem.

This paper is one of a series from the Beginning Principal Study, conducted by the research team, Professor Geoff Beeson, Dr. Robin Matthews, Jenny Baker and Margaret Mallia, from Deakin University .

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Introduction

The significance of these words on the previous page, tells much about one beginning principal's philosophy . Visiting the principal's office for the first time revealed a lot about her values, beliefs and aspirations. The words quoted above were neatly printed and framed, then positioned prominently in the office. As the principal's first year progressed, and the visits and interviews proceeded as planned, other aspects of this principal's influence came to the fore. There were examples of children's work proudly displayed in the office. The children, laughing and smiling most of the time, obviously felt free to come into this area, for what ever reason, and knock on the door, which was usually opened. Staff poked their head around the door, came in and spoke to the principal. It was only when the interview was taking place , that the office door was closed - but the staff knew why the researcher was there asking questions. They too, would be interviewed at some time through the year, if they were willing to participate..

In all, a total of twelve beginning principals, (eight in 1989, a second cohort of four joined the project in 1990) also had a story to tell, each one was very different for various reasons, but each one as important as the other. The twelve principals had willingly agreed to embark upon this long journey lead by the four researchers .The purpose of this journey, a longitudinal study from 1989-1993, the Beginning Principal Study (B.P.S.) is

> to gain an insight into the world of the beginning principal and to identify expectations, concerns, challenges and keys to success relevant to the important role of the principal. (Beeson and Matthews, 1990)

Longer term aims of the study are to identify keys to success for the important role of principal, appropriate support systems for the beginning principal, and research based training and induction..

The Beginning Principal Study.

In 1989 a team of researchers from Deakin University (formerly Victoria College), Melbourne , Australia , embarked on the Beginning Principal Study (here-after referred to as B.P.S.) The B.P.S. concentrates on the work of beginning principals, in both secondary and primary schools in Victoria, in contrast to other studies (O'Dempsey, 1976; Willis, 1980; Chapman,1985)

which focussed on the work of experienced principals. For the purpose of the study., Beeson and Matthews (1992:312) define

> First-time principals as those who had not previously held a principalship and who had little or no experience as an acting principal.

The design of the B.P.S. was influenced mainly by two studies which investigated the worklife of secondary principals. One study, by Weindling and Earley, (1987) had been completed in the United Kingdom while another study was being undertaken in the United States by Parkay and Hall (1992). The research focus for this Australian Study was similar to the studies just mentioned, but aimed to document the experiences of first-time principals, in both the primary and secondary schools under the auspices of the Victorian Ministry of Education. The rationale, design, selection of principals and the methodology used in the study, have been documented in previous papers. (Beeson, Matthews and Baker, 1990; Beeson and Matthews, 1991: Beeson and Matthews, 1992)

The purpose of this paper.

The purpose of this paper is to share with you some of the insights from the interview data, collected during the first year of the B.P.S,. that illuminates the work life of a beginning principal as manager.of the school. To make sense of the enormous amount of data that has been gathered, the writer proposes to use some of the research findings of Mintzberg (1973, 1989) as a framework for discussion only. The B.P.S. is not a replica of Mintzberg's study, nor was it intended to be. Another aspect that will not be revisited in this paper, are the relevant strengths and weaknesses of the various methodologies..These issues have been debated in previous papers and journal articles. (Gronn, 1982, 1984, 1987; Willower, 1983; Thomas , 1986).

Theoretical background to the discussion framework.

Mintzberg (1989 : 5) stated that;

> In some sense, the twentieth century might be characterised as the age of management.

Research into management, and the type of work that managers are involved in on a daily basis, was carried out by Mintzberg in the early 1970's as a result of his earlier university studies and his pre-occupation with the question "What do managers do? Today, this research is still very highly regarded, although

in some quarters rather controversial, but it has been the basis of several books written on the subject. Unlike many books written about management, Mintzberg based his research findings on empirical results. A full account of this research can be found in Mintzberg's book , The Nature of Managerial Work (1973) and one of its successors, which included some revisions of earlier work, Mintzberg on Management: Inside our Strange World of Organisations (1989). However, for those who are not conversant with Mintzberg's work, a brief overview of the research will assist your further understanding and lead you to a greater appreciation of the beginning principal's role as a manager.

Mintzberg's (1973).study, The Nature of Managerial Work.,. in which he observed five chief executive officers, focussed on finding out the specific nature of managerial work, the characterisitcs of activities that managers engage in throughout the duration of the day and the roles that managers play in an organisation. Included in this group of people were the chairman of a consulting firm, the president of a technological research and development firm, the general director of a hospital, the president of a manufacturing firm and the superintendent of a school district. The findings from this study concentrated in the main, on three aspects of managerial work.

(A) The nature of managerial work

Mintzberg's (1973) study revealed some very interesting insights into the nature of managerial work. He proposed that manager's jobs are remarkably alike, the work is challenging and non-programmed, the manager is both a specialist and a generalist, the manager derives his power from information, the prime occupational hazard for managers is superficiality and managerial work is far more complex than the literature would suggest.

(B) Characteristics of managerial work.

However, Mintzberg will probably be better remembered for his pithy description that managerial work is characterised by brevity, variety and fragmentation. Other characteristics of managerial work alluded to the fact that most managers work at an unrelenting pace, have a preference for action, spend considerable time in communicating and interacting with people.

(C) Managerial roles.

The third aspect of Mintzberg's research, relates to his findings in which he refers to the roles that managers portray during their working day. Mintzberg (1973,1989) himself stated , that these ten observable roles, which he believed were inherent in managerial work, (figurehead, leader, liaison, monitor, disseminator, spokesman, entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator and negotiator) were useful as a categorising process. He stated they appear to be separate and discrete roles, but in effect they formed "a gestalt, an integrated whole" (p96).The roles are inter-related and interdependent. He also made it very clear that managers had to manage an organisation within a very complex environment that demanded

> the incumbent manager to perform a set of managerial roles and the requirements of these roles lead to common work characteristics. (Mintzberg, 1973 :55)

Research studies influenced by Mintzberg's work.

According to Martinko and Gardner (1985:684) one of the most important findings that emerged from Mintzberg's work was, in fact related to the roles of managers;

> Perhaps the most imortant results of Mintzberg's (1973) research are his in-depth realistic description of managerial behaviour as exemplified by his ten roles...Mintzberg was the first to delinineate the composite set, thus advancing a conceptual framework for looking at a manager's job. Consequently, unlike earlier researchers, Mintzberg was able to integrate his findings by describing not only the "what" but also the function or "why" of managerial work.

This latter point is a note of contention with some researchers, particularly Stewart(1982). who noted that several researchers with an interest in this area, had concentrated specifically on "the roles" to the detriment of other aspects of Mintzberg's work.However, this does not appear to be the case in all instances. It is counteracted by the fact, that a considerable number of researchers including O'Dempsey (1976), Duignan (1980), Willis (1980), and Martin and Willower (1981) for example, who did not only use these roles in their studies, but in addition, addressed other issues, for example -work activity, work behaviour, related to the characteristics of managerial work.

Thomas (1986) and Martinko and Gardner (1985,990) attribute the resurgence of interest and academic discussion pertaining to managerial work to be mainly a result of Mintzberg's indepth research into the work

behaviours and work activities of managers. One of the more interesting outcomes of Mintzberg's work was the applicability and use of his research findings across a broad spectrum of managers. Groups of managers involved in further research also included school principals, both elementary and secondary, in Australia, England, America and Canada.

Kotter's (1982) research , for instance, took Mintzberg's study as its departure point. Investigating the work of fifteen general managers,. Kotter wanted answers to three questions:

1 What is the nature of general managers jobs today?

2 What kind of people become effective general managers?

3 What exactly do effective G.M.'s do? (Kotter, 1982:121)

Both Kotter's and Mintzberg's studies have been very influential in describing what managers do. One of the main differences between Kotter's (1982) study and that of Mintzberg (1973) was the importance Kotter placed on the individual manager: his educational background, personality factors, intellectual capacity, his ability to interact with others and the knowledge related to the organisation itself. This put a more human face to management and pointed to the significance of networks and power in management.

During the 1980's there were several research studies influenced by Mintzberg's prior work, but conducted in other countries; America, Canada, England, Korea, as well as in Australia, to try and define the nature and characteristics of various aspects of the principal's working day, for example, the tasks, activities, communication patterns, decision-making processes, interpersonal relationships and behaviour. There were also studies that attempted to describe the roles and expectations of the principal. (O"Dempsey, 1976: Willis, 1980: Duignan, 1980; Crowson and Porter-Gehrie, 1980; Martin and Willower,1981; Kmetz and Willower, 1982; Chung and Miskel,1989; Martinko and Gardner, 1990:) O'Dempsey, (1976) was the first Australian researcher to apply many of Mintzberg's findings to his Australian study of three school principals.This research found a high degree of commonality in the work content and work characteristics of school principals when compared with the information related to Mintzberg's managers.

Martinko and Gardner (1990) observed forty-one school principals as the sample for their research. While acknowledging and supporting earlier

studies, such as those of Mintzberg (1973) and Stewart (1982), Martinko and Gardner replicated Mintzberg's study, but in addition to this, they looked at other factors which impinged upon the manager's role..The outcomes of their work reveal that , the principal's behaviour was related to the size of the school, (which had implications for staffing, number and class sizes), the geographic position of the school and the socio-economic status of the school in the community. While there are common key components of the principal's work, there are also some differences according to the position they hold., for example if they are primary or secondary principals. The size of the school is found to be an important factor in determining the role of the principal.

What have we learnt from the Beginning Principal Study ?

Stages of development.

Analysis of the material collected in the first six months of the B.P.S. revealed that the principals appeared to follow a similar pattern of developmental stages in their new role. This pattern emerged despite the differences that existed between the principals and the schools. Like Scotty, several of the principals had been promoted from a Senior Teacher position. He not only had to come to grips with the principal role itself, but also wondered about his own capabilities:

> Remember, I've gone straight from being a Senior Teacher to a principal's position. I had a lot of concerns about whether I would be able to do it. It is after all a statesmanlike role and I'm not in the habit of wearing grey suits, although I did go out and buy one. (B.P.S. Interview Data)

Several of the principals spent considerable time during the last few weeks of the Christmas vacation at the school sorting through policy documents, reading the mail that had come from the Ministry, going through material that had been left by the previous principal, talking to staff who were preparing for the coming year and generally trying to come to terms with the complex task at hand. Here is a brief account of what Rita was faced with :

> I spent a considerable amount of time during the January holidays establishing a filing system, looking around at resources, talking to the cleaners. A great deal of time and energy was taken in maintaining staffing levels. The acting principal had underestimated the number of children to be enrolled for this year with the result that there could have been two staff members less. Time was also spent in arranging the availability of portable classrooms. This all happened before school actually started ! (B.P.S. Interview Data)

Some of the principals were frustrated in their efforts to find out more about the school because of the lack of documentation, and in a couple of instances this progress was further impeded because the support staff of the school were

also new. This example typifies some of the frustrations felt by one of the incoming principals:

> Because there had been a temporary secretary at the school the previous year, there was a lack of communication, as there was really no-one who could inform the new principal how the school had operated before.

The principal said this was very difficult initially in many ways, but that gave her the opportunity to set up new systems with the recently appointed secretary in a manner that would work for both of them. Another frustration experienced by incoming principals was that of staff relationships. In several of the schools the lack of staff unity was very obvious, more so in the schools where the previous acting principal or deputy principal had applied for the position of principal and was unsuccessful.

One of the principals had to move from the country, buy a family home which, incidently he said, " needed a great deal of renovation before we could even live in it". He did not go any where near the school until a couple of days before the school year commenced..He needed a complete break away from school life. The entry strategies of the principals were diverse, and yet each one of them said they would probably do the a similar thing again.

The first few weeks of the school year were busier than most of the principals had anticipated. Many of them had not been aware of the sheer bulk of administration that had to be accomplished in a relatively short time. There was a need to pay greater attention to staffing issues, parental participation (for example the School Council) and concerns about their children, and student discipline was a priority in most schools. One of the most pressing demands for Reg was the necessity of getting assistance from the Regional Office for a disabled child in the integration program. The assistance was promised because of a phone call during an interview with the irate parents.

By the third and fourth months the principals focussed a lot of their energy and time on staff relationships. By the middle of the year they were feeling tired, but seemed to feel that they had at last been able to put some balance in their life, so that school did not preoccupy them all the time.

Having had a glimpse, brief as it may be, at the first few months of principalship, we may well ask, "what is the nature of principalship and how have the beginning principals coped with the transition to a new position ?" Returning to the suggested framework for discussion, that is , findings from Mintzberg's (1973) study as outlined earlier in the paper: (A) the nature and

(B) characteristics of managerial work and (C) the roles managers portray, the following picture of the beginning principals' early days is depicted in the following discussion.

(A) The nature of managerial work.

(A.1) Similarity of manager's jobs.

Mintzberg's (1973,1989) studies revealed that manager's jobs are remarkably alike. This too, holds true for principals. Principals are always dealing with staff, parents , students, the community, resources, policies, and higher authorities, to name but a few..All the principals attend numerous meetings, both during and after school hours, (some scheduled, others unscheduled.), .had desk work to attend to, responded to numerous phone calls, took tours around the school, wrote reports and newsletters. and responded to what seemed somedays, a never-ending string of emergencies .Although the tasks undertaken are similar, it is the context that is different.The demands and constraints which are specific to a particular situation influence the process of decision-making that a principal must take. (Stewart, 1982) For example, within the first two weeks of the school year, a new principal was faced with the following situation, where the context and location of the school put the principal in a position where he had to make a decision, which he felt was not appropriate, when contacted by the local media:

> Relationships with the local media is proving to be Andy's major dilemma. Recently windows at the school were broken and the reporter wanted to highlight vandalism, but was not convinced by Andy to highlight the positive happenings at the school. He has decided that the best approach is to allow the negative report to be published but to ensure that good reports will eventually dominate. (Site 2)

(A.2) Challenging and Non-programmed Work.

Many of the principals said it was the challenge of the job that they enjoyed the most, and one of the more significant factors that led them to applying for the position. The majority of the principals commented about the time spent in unforeseen adminstrative tasks, the impromptu meetings with staff, unscheduled visits from parents.

Reg had some very challenging sessions with a small group of parents who insisted that they speak to him regarding one of the teachers. in the first few weeks of school starting .He also had to contend with an extremely difficult parent whose child was in the integration program. This parent would never take no for an answer, argue continuously, demand to talk with him, and

would not leave the school until he did. The cycle would be exacerbated, because after visiting the school, this same parent would go to the Regional Office and go through the same procedure. Then the Regional Office would phone the principal. to inform him of what had happened and ask questions of Reg. This cycle of interactions continued for several weeks.

Coping with emergencies took a lot of time. and energy. One of the principals for example, had to contend with the abduction of one of the students. The implications of this particular issue, the contact with police, communications with the Regional Office, the student's family, the counselling of children who saw the incident, meetings with other adults who were present (this incident happened early in the morning as the children were coming to school) took several days of investigation and co-operation with the various authorites.

The principal of one of the country secondary schools faced an enormous challenge in the first few weeks of taking up his appointment. The story is as follows:

> There was a very difficult period just before Easter when two students were killed by a young driver who was over 0.05. He (the principal) found the problem to be physically demanding, but he received a lot of support in the school. He had contacted many of the parents, particularly the parents of the deceased children, he talked to the appropriate house leaders.His own daughter had been a classmate of one of the deceased. He was concerned about the contagious nature of grief and had talked to the classes and tried to calm the students, who were very badly affected. He had the problem of involving the whole school in the funeral and had to brief the funeral directors and brief the students about the guard of honour. Finally he had to arrange student welfare counselling for the students subsequent to the funeral. All in all , it had been very distressing. Although nothing good can be said about it, it certainly had been something which had created a great bond in the students and the community. (B.P.S. interview data, Site 8)

One of the major concerns that principals spoke of, was the amount of time and energy that had to be invested in resolving problems, and developing and maintaining staff relationships. Much of the challenge and unprogrammed activity falls into this category.

(A.3) The Manager is both a generalist and a specialist.

This notion in itself is a contradiction. Yet, this is what principals are expected to be..

One of the concerns that faced many of the principals in the study was the necessity to sort out all the administration. Coming to grips with the financial aspects of running the school created concerns for the principals, as many of them had little experience and knowledge of finances at this level. This was

made more difficult because the principals could not get any satisfaction from the Ministry personnel or get assistance to teach staff how to operate the computer accounting packages. In one of the schools, for instance, no budgeting had been done, so the principal had to spend considerable amounts of time just being involved and seeking advice ensuring that the financial aspects of the school were under control so the school could function properly.

In spite of all the "people emphasis " that is paramount in education, no one could have prepared the principals to be specialists in all the people related areas, and in particular issues related to industrial relations. .One of the principals commented that she felt she had good people skills, particularly when she was a teacher, but she now feels, that she needs to attend courses in general people management to assist her cope and manage all the 'people associated problems." .

(A.4) Power from information

The manager is seen to be the "nerve-centre of the organisation"., gathering and disseminating information from internal and external sources. The quality of the decisions made , depends on the quality and reliabilty of the information gleaned and the processes used to make a decision.

Power has many faces in the school system. For some of the principals just the processes of getting to know the school was a formidable exercise as can be seen from this report:

> Bill is supported by an Acting Deputy Principal who he regards as efficient and takes care of the day to day burdens. However, the school bursar transferred out of the school at the end of last year, the school secretary left and the treasurer (a teacher) resigned before the start of school at the beginning of 1989. This meant, that those who knew about the administration of the school left before Bill arrived. In addition, the former Deputy Principal had left, and the person doing the time-table had also changed, resulting in an almost complete change of the school administration. This created difficulties in terms of continuity from the previous year to the present year (Site 6)

In Victorian schools, the Ministry has an industrial agreement with the teacher unions which specifies certain decision-making structures which must be established in each school. The Local Administration Committee (L.A.C.) is made up of representatives from the staff, the unions and nominations of the principal. The principal may choose to be an active member of the committee or act upon the advice and recommendations given.This committee makes recommendations about teaching loads, staff in excess and recent Ministry

requirements. The Curriculum Committee, constituted in a similar manner to the L.A.C., makes recommendations to the L.A.C. regarding organisation and operation of the curriculum. As industrial relations issues are evident in all the schools, some of the principals have dual membership of the principal associations and the teacher unions in order to understand the positions of both parties.

The manner in which the principals view the work of these two committees and the responsibility given to each varies to a certain degree with every principal. Some of the principals accept the decisions made by the committees, others see the committees purely as advisory bodies and firmly believe that the principal has the final say. These issues and others relating to decision-making and power are more fully explored in another paper by Matthews and Beeson. (1991)

Many of the beginning principals lack the knowledge, experience and confidence to deal with non-teaching staff which includes cleaners, gardeners and canteen workers.

(A.5) Superficiality - the prime occupational hazard for managers.

The notion of the "busy person syndrome" aligns with the ideas expressed by Mintzberg (1973) and further highlighted by Martin and Willower (1981) and Kmetz and Willower (1982) who all claimed that most of the manager's work was characterised by brevity, variety and fragmentation, thus leading to the concept that the work was only superficial and not in any depth at all. Willis(1980) reported that it appeared that principals were either at the beginning, the middle and the end of numerous issues at the same time, never being really certain when the issue would surface again.

For those people who have observed principals at work, or have been in that position themselves, would possibilby agree in part with those sentiments. But what other people do not see , is the mental activity, problem solving and planning that principals go through as they are attending to other issues. Sometimes, there seems to be an aura of suspicion about the principals' work, just because there is no written evidence to say what the principal has done.. It has been known that some staff believe that principals should be more accountable for their work and staff have asked for explanations..The very fact that principals spend a lot of their time talking to people is not always seen

as productive work. Yet it is often in these circumstances that many small problems and issues are worked through.

Principals referred to the need to organise their time more effectively and try to have a priority of tasks to attend to. One of the principals commented about the "fiddly bits" she had to attend to, and another commented on the need to rationalise her time so that the role of principal did not dominate her life completely. The busiest time of the day for many principals was the early morning when staff, students and parents were getting ready for the day and at the end of the day as the different groups were going home. In these circumstances it is easy to understand why some people believe that the principal's work is superficial, as they appear to flit from one activity to the other.

(A.6) The Complexity of the Role.

The principals commented on the large number of things that had to be done in their new role, the variety and number of demands on their time, and the multitude of problems to be addressed and solved, resulting in their being unable to address important educational issues. One of the principals said after the first two weeks that she had never been so tired and worked so hard in all her life. The last two weeks (this was at the beginning of the first term) have been exhausting in time and effort.

The role is not what one principal expected. This was complicated by the fact that she was spending a lot of the time at weekends doing school related work. She emphasised the fact that one needed time to come to grips with what was happening, to be realistic and logical (If at all possible !), the staff were not following the guidelines as set out, this was compounded by the lack of staff unity. Although she wanted to get into the classrooms, if she did this, then the office work did not get done.

It is not really possible for the literature to explain fully the complexity of the job. One really has to be in the role of principal to appreciate and experience all the hidden agendas. and demands. What other occupations have a client base that is so varied ? An example of this diversity is reflected in the profile of one of schools described in the study :

> the school had many unusual and problem students- homeless, gothics (those who wear all black), scchizophrenics, street kids, those in the drug scene, dropouts from the private schools. There was no strong ethnic group. (Site 7.)

Adding to the problems that these students bring with them to school on a daily basis, the low morale of staff, policies that are outdated, and some that are not written at all, lack of resources, the need to find housing for some of the students, constant contact with welfare agencies - who could deny that the principal's lot is a complex one ?

(B.) Distinguishing Characteristics of Managerial Work.

(B.1.) The unrelenting pace.

> Lesley's term as principal started very quietly but soon moved into a frenetic.pace There were, as she said, issues that arose that she couldn't have predicted beforehand. The major theme of the issues as she reported term were relationships with others - school staff of all kinds, Regional Office personnel, other Ministry people ands School Council. At this time (mid way through the year) Lesley appears to have coped with what were to her considerable crises. This is not to say it is all downhill from here, but life seems to be a bit more orderly and there is a chance that the focus of her activities will be more on growth and development rather than resurrection. (Site 5 data)

Several of the principals remarked about the hectic pace prevalent in their work loads. With the exception of one principal , who says she is "able to tune out and off the moment she leaves the school" all the others said they found it difficult to do this and were always conscious of the tasks having priority the following day. Many of the principals also went back to the school at the weekend or stayed late to complete important tasks or "just to catch up on the bits and pieces" they were unable to do through out the day.

Wally is the only principal in the study who makes it a habit "to take time out" and reflect on his role of principal. He even admits that sometimes this is almost impossible, but the time is most valuable. as it assists him to redirect his efforts when and if necessary. Wally, like all the principals in the study, appreciated the time set aside for interviews with the researchers. The principals agreed it was good to know that at least someone was interested in what they do. The time taken in the interviews was most beneficial because they were then forced to stop, reflect and take time out for themselves..

There were times when the hectic pace at which the principals worked made it difficult for the interviewers to make appointments for interviews. Sometimes the appointments had to be changed several times. This was very frustrating for one interviewer in particular, as it often took several phone calls just to

make contact with the principal, let alone to negotiate a time for the appointment !

Rita often spoke of the frantic pace at which she worked, but she clarified this by talking about the events that were happening. simultaneously. Examples of the lively pace included a description of events that occurred during Education Week , when the school was opened every day for visitors, the very tight timeline for L.O.T.E. submissions, report writing, end of term, questionnaires being sent out to parents regarding the establishment of a music program in the school and results being drawn up.

School Council Meetings also took a considerable amount of the principals' time. For each meeting there was always a lot of work to do in preparation for the meeting and the follow up often took several days. As Wally had stated several times

> Council work is demanding. It takes a week to prepare and a few days follow up after the meeting , including several phone calls..(Interview data)

Reg too commented about the nervous energy that was expanded at School Council meetings, but more so when procedures were not in accord with Ministry documents. On one occasion he had "to put the President in his place and explain very clearly and firmly the role of the School Council President." This episode caused some ill-feeling for several days after the meeting. In another episode involving parents, Reg reminisced:

> The husband of the president of the Parents Association blew his stack. It was a comedy of errors in which he talked about Council members and teachers. This was cleared up at the next Council Meeting.

Mintzberg (1973), Martin and Willower (1982) Acker (1990) and Martinko and Gardner (1990) found that although managers do have programmed and routine work to do, there is also a lot of unprogrammed activity that adds to the hectic way of life. Mangers at all levels respond to work at an unrelenting pace, responding to a constant stream of demands, often working long hours and in some instances without sufficient break to recoup expanded energy. One of the reasons for this pace is the unending, and often open-nature of the job, never being certain when the job is finished. The principals in our study are not exceptions to these obvservations..

(B.2) Brevity, variety and fragmentation.

There does not seem to be any set pattern for distractions, such as, the unsolicited visitor at the office door, the untold number of phone calls during the day (they even seem to be more if the secretary is not present !) or the letters that just have to be signed, or the students coming to the office for messages, breaches of discipline or to be congratulated for outstanding effort. As a result of these interruptions, the principal must be able to shift moods quickly and frequently, thereby changing patterns of concentration just as quickly.

It seems that the principals accept these interruptions as a characterisitic of the work and accept it as inevitable. Their comments about the pace of the work, imply that these characterisitcs brevity, (I only have a few moments to talk with you) variety, (there are so many things to do) and fragmentation (I just seem to start one thing and then get interrupted) go hand in hand with each other. One of the principals commented, " It's a problem to keep on top of everything: there is just so much happenning at the moment."

(B.3) Preference for action.

There was never any shortage of tasks that the principals had to do, for example, writing submissions for funding. Quite often there were several of these submssions that were due at the same time, even though the tasks had been delegated in several instances. There was also the need to ensure that the buildings were adequate for the school's needs and that the grounds were well maintained by the gardeners. The principals also had to maintain a very high and positive image of the school in the wider community. . They seemed to take into account the need to educate parents in their role in the school community, whether that be in serving on the School Council, working in the canteen, or as a member of the Parents Association..In some instances parents were invited to in-service sessions to help them understand how the children were being taught, why the school had to resort to composite classes for the following year. There were occassions too when parents were invited to Open Forum sessions. to help set the agenda for the ensuring year and to solicit ideas for school improvement.

(B.4) Attraction to the Verbal Media

Much of the principal's time is spent in talking with others and much of the principal's work is accomplished through this medium. The principal spends a great deal of time attending meetings, either conducting them or as a member

of one of the committees. The principal's world is basically a verbal world, spending up to two thirds of working time in communicating with others. (Kmetz and Willower, 1982)

Principals initiated different types of meetings to keep the staff informed of what was happening in the school each day. These often took the form of briefing meetings for a few minutes each morning. Staff meetings were held on a regular basis, although there were sometimes different emphases for the meetings each week. Staff often commented on the number of meetings they were expected to attend during lunch time and also after school.

In the secondary schools where much of the emphasis was in curriculum planning and development, mostly for Yrs. 11,12 and reviews of other year levels were in progress, many meetings were set aside by the Curriculum Committee in consultation with the principal for discussion of the many issues that emerged. Principals in the primary sector also set aside time for discussion with the staff when any changes were imminent. One of the problems that principals faced, was encouraging the staff to be involved in the meetings and to take responsibilty for some of the follow up work that needed to be completed after each meeting.

In general, there seemed to be a preference for verbal communication, rather than written , as written communication took far longer to procure the desired responses.

(B.5) Strong communication with outside networks.

The principals have commented on the strong use of networks in their areas, not only as support systems to work through pressing problems , but for the exchange of staff and resources as well. Several factors influenced the set up of the networks: the need to keep in contact with other principals, apart from those who attend the Principals' Association meetings, the working parties related to curriculum issues, for example the Social Justice Curriculum, keeping in touch with people who could assist with issues related to industrial relations.

Other principals looked to past principals who could offer advice or support, or sometimes "just a listening ear".

> There are certainly other principals in the area and principals I have known for some time in other regions. There is a network of women principals with whom I can relate. (Site 10)

One of the principals made some initial approaches to others in the immediate area to set up a network:

> I've made some initial approaches. I've asked other schools to try and involve members of staff in the planning. I feel that I need ongoing professional development and I want to have networks operating. Three teachers have now now decided to go for assessment, so I've had assessment preparation sessions with our staff and teachers from two other schools. (Site1.)

Reg spoke of his involvement with a group of four principals who meet on a regular monthly basis to discuss adminstration procedures, staffing, submissions.

> We often share policies, curriculum programs, items of interest and assist each other in any way we can. Apart from the meetings we are often in contact by phone .In the last few months we have installed facsimile machines in the offices and often use these as a means of transmitting information very quickly..

One of the main findings from Kotter's (1982) research revolved around the importance of networks. He noted that the establishment of networks was most important to the manager's communication pathways, not only for the information that could be gathered for the manager's agenda, but also, the external and internal networks were invaluable for implementing many of the manager's plans.

Thus, it can be seen from the comments and experiences quoted above, the principals in the research program valued the networks very highly.in the initial stages of their appointments.

(C) The Manager's Working Roles.

(C.1) The Interpersonal Roles

Mintzberg (1973) stated that the manager's working roles involve ten roles. Although they are described separately, they cannot be seen as separate, discrete roles - in fact, they cannot be isolated. as they are interdependent and inter-related The ten managerial roles - figurehead, leader,liaison, monitor, disseminator, spokesman, entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator and negotiator, form a gestalt, an integrated whole.

The Interpersonal Roles, those which relate to the manager as figurehead, leader and liaison, provide the manager with the opportunity to perform duties that are ceremonial and symbolic in nature. These three roles arise directly from the formal authority and status bestowed upon the person as principal.

Leadership is the most significant of all the roles, as leadership permeates all activities. As Principal, he or she has the responsibility for the motivation of staff and all aspects pertaining to leading the staff to achieve the school's goals.

One of the concerns that emerged in the first year of the B.P.S. was the principals' concerns about leadership. This concern was focussed on a cluster of three foci : (a) concern regarding staff relationships, (b) getting the work in the school done effectively, and (c) their own concern in relation to the direction that they were taking the school. The following examples indicate the principals' concerns:

* The staff are very comfortable - they have been in the school a long time, but this in a sense mitigates against progress. Because they are so comfortable, it will be difficult to get them to change. (Site3

* Wally feels very comfortable with his school. Things are happening and he feels respected. So far he has a good working relationship with the staff and feels no hostility or lack of support . The school is operating smoothly and he expects it to continue to do so.

* I try to give them responsibilty, i.e. I delegate downwards. I consider that if they are to achieve something this will increaae ther self esteem and that 'something will happen' - at least I hope so. This is better than ticking them off and telling them they are lazy bludgers. (Site 7)

* Let people think they are doing it themselves. Engender enthusiasm, commitment, ownership and pride through shared leadership (Site 10)

* There is a real need to bring the curriculum from the 1970's to the 1990's. This itself is a huge challenge, because it not only involves the staff (some have done recent study) but it means educating the parents as well. (Site10)

* In the middle of the year Reg organised a public forum for parents., teachers and the wider community. The purpose was to address two key questions concerning the purpose and direction of the school:"What should we preserve?" and "How can we make the school better?" The action was in response to criticism and interference in the running of the school which had been the practice of some parents in the previous year. Reg reported that the attendance of 70 parents and their participation in the eight working groups set up " far exceeded their expectation.'

* There will be a big publicity campaign to try and attract more students. (Site 3)

* Things are going well and he is very busy, all the more so, because he is pro-active. Having made all the changes in direction, he is now reaping the heavy workload. This is particularly so in the arts and technology areas, which he wants to include in a master plan for the 1990's. (Site 8)

* One thing I have learned is that I need to make long term goals and not want everything to happen at once. I need to slow down. (Site 10)

As figurehead, the principal has the duty of representing the school in all formal matters. These may be either social or legal. Reg addressed this role

by attending the school camp which was held only a few weeks after he began as principal. This had not been done by the previous principal.

> He commented that it was great and that he had had a good time. He got to know the senior students and also two of the senior staff. He received a lot of positive feedback from these staff about what he had been doing so far. He had been told by them it was great to have a principal who backed his staff.

Principals contributed to the school life in many and diverse ways. Some had accompanied the school choir or drama groups to competitions in the area, others had school fairs where parents and staff worked together raising funds for the school. In one of the schoools where a fair had been organised provided the opportunity for the parents to be more aware of the work that teachers do.:

> Yes, the School Fair has contributed a greater understanding of the role of staff and parents. The preparation for the fair was going on during the "work to hours rule" imposed by the unions. As a staff it was decided to continue all the preparations as too much would be lost if the staff did not assist. Staff could choose to be involved or not, and if they were involved they agreed to document the extra hours of work and tasks undertaken in this time. This proved to be a very good way to assist parents understand the teacher's role in greater depth. All this documentaion was taken to the School Council.

Jane was involved in negotiations to set up a bi-lingual school, negotiations that continued for several months with representatives of another cultural group. Principals who had students involved with drugs were involved in liaising with the various legal advisers. The vandalism at one school necessitated constant contact with the local police force. Thus it can be seen through pointing out these few examples , that principals are involved in another aspect of leadership which is not usually mentioned.

It has already been brought to bear, that principals place great importance and value on the networks that have been formed for various reasons. This is one of the key components of the liaison role which allows principals the opportunity to communicate more effectively with peers outside their school. The development and recognition of the principal's reputation depends on strengthening this role. Jane, for instance, had commented about her interest in curriculum development at one of the network meetings she attended. As a result of this other principals in the area recognised her strengths in curriculum development, and they now phone her to ask advise about curriculum matters. All the principals have a variety of strategies to link their school with the wider community.. One such initiative saw the principal of a secondary school, which was facing falling enrolment numbers, visit all the primary schools in the area and invited staff to information sessions at her

school with the intention of generating a renewed interest in what her school had to offer.

The interpersonal roles place the principal in such a position that it is possible to gather information more freely than other members in the organisation. This then gives rise to the next set of roles that enables the principal to build up a broad knowledge base of what is happening both inside the school and in the community.

(C.2) The Informational Roles.

The principal is the focal point of the information centre of the school, and as such, has often been referred to as "the nerve centre of the organisation", because of the unique access he has to a variety of networks. The information that comes to the principal falls into mainly into five areas which relate to internal operations, (e.g. finance, staffing, curriculum) external events, (e.g. Ministry directives), analyses, (e.g. declining school numbers) ideas and trends (e.g District Provisions, integration program) and pressures. (e.g. industrial realtions issues). Some of this information comes via letters, other information is gathered by attendance at a number of meetings, either internal or external to the school or by telephone. The principal's role as information monitor places pressure on the principal to be certain that the information is given to the most appropriate person.

The principal faces a dilemma in the role of disseminator One of the inherent problems with this role is the dilemma of delegation. Wally has overcome this problem to a certain degree :

> All planned structures are in place which means that now nothing doesn't happen without a reference point.Now when all the mail comes in he always has an approriate area to direct it to for attention. Of course he realises that staff have different levels of understanding of the structures and these levels of understanding probably varied with need from beginning teachers to the more experienced. staff.

The principals stated that where there was a good working relationship with the deputy principal it was a lot easier to delegate some, or most of the day-to-day running of the school. This was the case, with particular reference to discipline problems that seemed to take so much of the principal's time. The problem of delegation arose for the new principals because they did not know their staff well enough to trust them to carry out specific tasks.

As spokesman for the school, the information is transmitted to various groups of people inside and outside the school. The principal is at the centre of the

communication network and is therefore charged with the responsibility of establishing effective communication channels betweeen the school, the Ministry, the parents and all associated agencies. This has been accomplished in a variety of ways - briefing meetings, staff meetings, open forums, newsletters, social activities., for a variety of purposes. In this role, the principal also acts in an official capacity as spokesman for the school , for example , at the school's Speech Night.

(C.3) Decision-making Roles.

The last four roles revolve around making choices. It is here that significant organisational decisions are made. These roles are probably the most crucial ones in the life of a principal, as the principal takes full charge and ultimate responsibility for all the decision-making in the organisation.

The entrepreneur role is to initiate and design change, but also to have the opportunity to oversee and review vital projects, sometime delegating all or part of the project. Most of these changes relate to curriculum issues. Many of the principals commented that they did not think that the current curriculum programs operating at the school were up to date and would change them accordingly as time permitted. With regard to changing curriculum Reg had stated that

> at the moment his plans for the school are relatively simple. He is reasonably happy with what is happenning in the classrooms, but he is prepared to innovate when the occassion arises.

It did not take Reg long to start changing the curriculum programs and getting the policies documented. A few weeks after making the statement above, he made moves to start reviewing the total curriculum, arranging for at least two pupil-free curriculum days for the staff.

At one of the country secondary schools , the principal established a VCE planning group and targeted a review process of school structures and policies. He conceded that this will take time, that he must use the appropriate channels, but nevertheless had written a document which he presented to staff as a forerunner to future discussion.

There are numerous examples of the principals being the catalyst for change throughout the B.P.S. data. Some of these changes involve parents, for example setting up a music program at one of the primary schools with the

parents prepared to pay the total cost of the program. Schools in one of the country areas combined to share facilities, timetables and staff.

The area that has the possibility of consuming a considerable amount of time for the principal is that of disturbance handler. Principals have given detailed accounts of the problems that are associated with staff, not only teaching staff, but ancillary staff as well. There is a story of a principal having to dismiss a cleaner because of problems associated with alchohol, another of a physical education teacher refusing to change from a very scanty leotard to something far more appropriate and professional. Some of the principals have had to speak rather sternly to teachers because of their perceived lack of professionalism.

One of the principals spoke about the power struggle between the parents working in the canteen. To overcome these problems, he instituted a Canteen Committee of which he and another teacher would be involved. Another incident which involved parents related to the School Council. The President seemed to believe he had a strong power base in that position and attempted to use that power inappropriately. The principal and the staff representative sat down after the meeting and worked out a motion for the following meeting to clearly define the role of all members on the School Council, as set out in the guidelines from the Ministry of Education.

Jane , who is principal of a small suburban school, said she found that a lot of time was given to dealing with the concerns of parents. Some complaining about teachers - too much homework, not enough homework. She also had problems with the staff and was not sure how she should handle these interrruptions. Early in the year she felt that she had little or no support from staff, and believed that she had inherited an unenviable situation where her authority was continually undermined, there was constant undercurrent amongst staff and constant undermining of decisions. She found these situations very difficult to handle.

Even before one of the principals could feel comfortable in the school, he had to overcome what he believed was a very serious issue that he inherited from the previous year. He informed the interviewer:

> There was a past vendetta between the principal and parents, parents and staff. In this case it was a deep-seated distrust that had arisen between the parent groups and the staff. These things needed to be resolved and needed to be resolved slowly and he felt the need to "strike while the iron was hot" but recognised that that he needed to hasten slowly.

There are other instances where grievance proceedings have been instigated and the process has taken not hours, but days and weeks of the principal's time , thus taking them away from other important issues and happenings at the school face.

These are a few of the examples of disputes that principals have had to contend with in the early days of their appointments. From these brief vignettes it is possible to understand how much of the principals time can be eroded in working through some of these issues. As resource allocator, the principal has final responsibility for the overall running of the school. This implies allocation of finances, staffing, adequate buildings, materials, and time-tabling . In the Victorian education system, the L.A.C. has some responsibilty in the structural arrangements of resources. The time-table is often the responsibility of the deputy principal or a senior teacher who has good problem solving and analytical skills. The timetable is often a source of irritation for many staff -

> Timetabling became an issue again,. Changes agreeed to at a staff meeting were supposed to last until the end of term before being reviewed. An argument erupted into an explosion after one week of implementation. (Site 1)

In taking up their positions some of the principals took time to investigate the resouces in the schools -equipment, books, paper, teaching aids, only to find in some circumstances that some teachers were very well set up and lacked nothing, while on the other hand there were teachers on the same staff who had very few resouces available to them. The problem was, how to provide equity of resources !

One of the most difficult people skills is that of a negotiator. and to make it more difficult , most of the principals have not had any specific training in negotiating skills. More and more of the principal's time is being spent in this role because of the committee structures that are expected to be in place in Victorian schools. For example, principals have to negotiate with support groups and a variety of other committees to ensure that all the requisites for the integration program are available. Where ever there is staff dissatisfaction, there is always negotiation . If there are submissions for funding , these too have to be negotiated. To be successful in this field , the principal needs to have excellent communication skills (both written and oral), and possess interpersonal skills of the highest calibre.

Even when the principal believes she has done "the right thing" there is often a chance that things may not be correct. Take the case of Rita for example:

> In finalising the grade levels for the folowing year, Rita thought she had gone though the correct consultative process (having spoken to each individual teacher) but had neglected to bring all the final decisions to the Administration Committee. This caused a few problems to say the least . "When I realised why they were so upset I admitted it was my mistake - I had made a genuine mistake. Sometimes these rulings and decision-making processes take so much longer"...(Here the researcher sensed a degree of frustration from Rita - she wanted to get on with the job.)

Bill too, was concerned about this question of collaborative decision making;

> The question of when to do which is really a perennial dilemma of this new collaborative decision-making thing. You are the boss, they expect you to be incredibly strong and determined and to know the right answers, but they expect you to refer to them too. It's incredibly hard to know which line to take !

No less stressful for the beginning principals was the need for them to learn to work co-operatively and effectively with the staff in powerful committees and be forever mindful of the relationships with all staff .

Conclusion.

Having welded together the data from the B.P.S. with the findings of Mintzberg's (1973) study, the nature and characteristics of managerial work and integrated these with the managerial roles , and then overlapped these findings with the emphasis Kotter (1982) placed on knowledge of the individual manager and then again, superimposed another layer of the findings related to demographic and geographic variables from Martinko and Gardner's (1990) study, we now have a far more detailed picture, although extremely complex and changing, of the principal as manager.

In addition to this portrait, we have a series of seven major concerns clusters that have been identified from the B.P.S. data thus confirming again the complexity of the role for all beginning principals in the study. The concerns, discussed in depth in another paper (Beeson and Matthews,1991) include

- relationships with staff
- policy and curriculum reviews and development
- administrative structure and financial management
- image of the school in the community
- communication within the school community
- time management

- student discipline

The beginning principals were very much concerned about providing leadership in all the above mentioned areas.There were other concerns that had more significance for some principals than others. These issues were identified as:

- the need to improve the physical environment of the school, including buildings and grounds and the provision of specialist facilities.
- the lack of support from the central Ministry of Education or its Regional Offices.
- the extent to which decision-making should be collaborative.
- the lack of preparation for dealing with non-teaching staff such as cleaners, gardeners, canteen workers, and related industrial relations issues.
- manitaining the number and classifaications of teachers at the prescribed level - neither under or over staffed .

The emphasis within the discussion framework throughout this paper on the beginning principal as manager highlights the fact, that, in becoming a principal, one must first come to terms with one's own strengths, knowledge of the community in which the school is placed, the nature and characteristics of managerial work, in addition to understanding and experiencing the roles that the principal is expected to fulfil. The beginning principal will become more confident, effective and efficient if appropriate induction, training and support systems based on research are put in place. The second stage of the B.P.S. will address these vital issues.

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